

Approved For Release 2004/10/28 : CIA-RDP88-01314R000300450042-8

## The Omniscient Press

On August 20, troops of five Warsaw Pact nations invaded and occupied Czechoslovakia. The news came as a stunning surprise to Americans who had read in the preceding three weeks: *The Guardian* (Aug. 17): "That the Soviets had no intention of marching into Czechoslovakia was apparent from the beginning. Reports of an impending invasion were the fabrication of hostile elements and press."

The *Nation* (Aug. 5): "There will certainly be no outside intervention. The Russians cannot afford to lose more of their dwindling retinue and perhaps risk another Hungary, which both sides use as a bogey against each other."

The *Christian Science Monitor* (Aug. 1): "The Czechoslovak Army is again counted one of the most efficient fighting forces in Europe and as seen by the Soviet Union potentially the most reliable, most effective army of the Warsaw Pact allies."

*UPI*, Prague (Aug. 19): "It is a measure of the freedom that has come to Czechoslovakia that 2,000 former secret policemen today wear the uniform of ordinary Prague patrolmen."

*Columnist Joseph C. Harsch* (Aug. 20): Washington appears to be clinging even more tenaciously than Moscow to the dwindling power of the sword. The Muscovites decided that there are better ways than tanks for handling painful problems with the Czechs; which amounted in effect to downgrading the sword as an instrument of policy."

Or, *Andrei Gromyko*, any place, any year: "Our country has always given resolute support to the national liberation movements of the peoples, the movements for freedom and independence. Our country has always been an active force in the struggle for the liquidation of colonial oppression."

## The High Cost of Nothing

Discussion of the Czech invasion has concerned for the most part its political and moral elements. It is advisable to begin paying somewhat more attention to its military dimension.

For example: Soviet and allied military power has in the past two months advanced several hundred miles westward in central Europe, and substantially westward all along the line. Two months ago there were no Soviet troops stationed in Czechoslovakia. Today there are more than half a million. Two months ago Czechoslovakia's borders with the Free World were lightly screened by Czech guards and soldiers; today six or more Soviet divisions are deployed along the West German border and other Soviet units are moving into place along the Austrian border. Reserve units have been called up in Poland and East Germany. At least a quarter of a million Soviet troops have been shifted westward to fill the places of the occupation armies—which means an over-all westward shift of Soviet military power.

Further: The invasion was a model military operation carried out with speed, precision, efficiency and discipline. This is all the more remarkable not only for the huge size of the invading force but in the fact that it comprised units from five different national armies, even if the satellite contingents were minor. The command difficulties in integrating actions of units from several nations are notorious. The invading force, moreover, included almost every sort of modern combat and support unit—infantry, armored, airborne, all types of aircraft, missile (including missile units with nuclear capability), artillery of all kinds, electronic, propaganda, every kind of supply, etc.—the works.

Again: Although the contingent preparation for the action must have begun months ago and the first decision to go ahead made at least days and probably weeks beforehand, no Western intelligence service called the shot. The buildup and maneuvering on the Czech border were of course known. Everyone understood that Moscow had the capability for the invasion—though not quite so impressive a capability as was demonstrated. But all Western services misjudged Moscow's intentions; none learned of or deduced the actual decision to strike.

And: The Western nations and their military arms were passive in the face of both the buildup and the actual invasion.

So: What is to prevent Moscow & Co. from invading another nation when it thinks the moment opportune? Neither our strategic nuclear force nor our tactical nuclear weapons nor the existing armies, navies and air forces of the NATO alliance stopped or attempted to stop the march into Czechoslovakia. So if it's Rumania next month? The Kremlin promised the White House? Quite possibly; like Hitler's Reich, the Kremlin has often enough made such promises, and its signature is on the UN Charter. But promises didn't help the Czechs when the tanks started moving. Yugoslavia? Berlin? West Germany? But now you're getting beyond "the Soviet sphere of interest." And did they promise to stay inside that mysterious sphere?

The *Economist*—the very soul of sobriety—is constrained to conclude: "The Russians' move forward means that there would be even less time for NATO to prepare itself against an impending attack than there was when these Russian divisions had to be sent forward from Russia itself. And after what has happened in Czechoslovakia—and the tough line the Russians are now taking with the West Germans—it can no longer be assumed that the men who are running the show in Moscow have written off the whole idea of an adventure into western Europe." In the same issue, a reader writes in: "So we pay for a NATO army that it should do nothing, silently, once a decade? I should have such a job.—Yours Faithfully." (P. W. Haston of Cloghane, County Kerry.)

Approved For Release 2004/10/28 : CIA-RDP88-01314R000300450042-8

Continued